

CONTENTS

	Page
Club News	21
Meets	22
Publications for Sale	23
Obituary : Dr. Bertram Austin Crook	25
Mendip Rescue Organisation Annual Report	26
M.R.O. Revised Call-out Arrangements	31
Not Now and Again, but Again and Again and Again Part I by F.J. Davies	32
Dry in Wookey Nine by W.I. Stanton	35
The Use of Ordnance Survey Material by the Wessex Cave Club by R.R. Kenney	39
From The Log	40

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## CLUB NEWS

### Subscriptions

Enclosed with this journal you will find a list of members who have not paid their subscriptions for the current year. This is the last journal that will be sent to the members listed, unless they pay up. If your name is on the list please don't delay, pay now while you remember.

### Upper Pitts

By the time you receive this journal it will be Spring. There are a lot of odd jobs that need doing in and around the hut. Most important of these is the painting of the outside woodwork. If you visit the hut why not lend a hand?

### Library

Work is continuing with the library installation at Upper Pitts. It is hoped that before the end of the year we will have the job completed. Thanks are due to John Ham for all the work he has put in so far.

### 40th Anniversary of the Club

On the weekend of September 28/29th your club will be 40 years old. Does anyone have any suggestions on how we could celebrate the occasion in a suitable manner. We do not want to have another Mendip booze-up, just as the same as all the others. The intention is that the only guests will be close friends of club members, and that we will try to encourage the older members to attend.

### New Members

We welcome the following new members:-

Robert Ellinor, 3 Chipperfield Drive, Kingswood, Bristol.

Barry A. Gay, 10 Cosbycote Avenue, London S.E.24.

Geoffrey Marshall, 29 Stonehill, Hanham, Bristol, BS15 3HP.

Shaun Patterson, 43 Fairmead Road, Yeovil, Somerset.

Tessa Pearce, 3 Rodwell Hall, Trowbridge, Wiltshire.

Christopher Richards, 11 Highland Close, Worlebury Hill, Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset.

### Spain

A party of members hope to return to the Picos de Europa late this summer.

### Access to Caves in the Charterhouse Area

The fact that some members have been paying another club for CCG permits suggests that it is time that everyone was reminded about the arrangements for access to caves in the Charterhouse area.

Bristol Waterworks own a large area of land in and near Velvet Bottom. The entrances to several large (and many smaller) caves are on this land. BWW do not object to people entering the caves provided that certain rules are adhered to. The most important of these is that there must be suitable insurance to protect BWW against any possible claim. Other conditions are that there is no pollution of waterways and that suitable measures are undertaken to protect the public from any danger. All quite reasonable really.

BWW do not want the trouble of administering any access procedures, and for this reason the Charterhouse Caving Committee was set up. The committee consists of representatives of clubs wanting access to the

relevant caves and willing to pay a share of the insurance premium. The Wessex is one of these clubs. There is an arrangement whereby any caver can gain access even though he is not a member of one of the CCC clubs. All he need do is pay a small fee (12½p) towards the cost of the insurance, and in exchange a permit will be issued. This permit is rather similar to a car insurance certificate in that it proves that you are covered by the necessary insurance. Members of the CCC clubs are issued with period permits FREE OF CHARGE.

#### To Obtain a Permit

Any club member should contact Dave Gordon, Yew Tree Farm, Chew Stoke, Bristol. Dave will issue a 3 year permit in exchange for either your old permit or a completed indemnity form.

Non-members should write to John Jones, 33A Dinaw Street, Nantymoel, Glamorgan. (Always send a S.A.E.).

#### To Obtain a Cave Key:-

Keys for those caves which are locked are held at Upper Pitts. They can be obtained from committee members on payment of a £1 returnable deposit.

Anyone wishing to visit a cave and unable to get to Upper Pitts can obtain a key from John Jones, giving as much notice as possible.

Please return keys promptly!

### MEETS

Saturday April 6th	Swildons Shatter Passage.
Friday April 19th	Rods and Reads, Burrington. Meet near U.B.S.S. hut.
Friday May 3rd	Stoke Lane. Meet in lane to east of cave.
Saturday May 18th	Wales. Meet at Penwyllt 9.45am.
Friday May 31st	Eastwater.
Friday June 14th	August/Longwood.
Friday June 28th	Manor Farm.
Friday July 12th	Swildons round trip

All trips meet at 7.30pm except Welsh trip. Names to Richard Kenny.

Please note: - The rendezvous for South Wales trips has been change from the "Gwynn Arms" to "The Ancient Briton" at Pen-y-cae.

## PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE

The following publications are available from R.R, Kenny, 'Yennek', St. Marys Road, Meare, Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 9SS.

Great Storms and Floods of July 1968 on Mendip.	60p +6p postage
Pioneer under the Mendips - Biography of H.E. Balch.	60p +6p
Mendip Karst Hydrology Research Project Phase 3.	50p +5p
Reprint of Wessex Journal Volume 1.	38p +7p
Supplement to Volume 8 Wessex Journal.	25p +7p
Journals Vols up to 11 inclusive.	15p +5p
Journals Vol 12 and onwards.	20p +5p

Those of us who have been in the Club for some time tend to take it for granted that everyone knows what the contents of these publications are like. For the benefit of the newer members I have given a brief description of the books, and I hope to follow this up in the next Journal with a full stock list of Journals held and a description of their prime contents.

The Club Accounts for last year showed assets of £134 tied up in these books - so you will help the Club by buying rather than borrowing!

### "The Great Storms and Floods of July 1968 on Mendip"

by J.D. Hanwell and M.D. Newson. 72 pages.

Pp 1-26. The storms of 10th and 11th July. Their effect on Western Europe, then Britain then Mendip. Illustrated with charts. The passage of the depression over Mendip with much explanatory detail. Occurrence of similar storms.

Pp 27-52. Major erosional effects of the floods. Diagrams and many photos of Mendip.

Pp 53-68. The dangers of flooding in caves. A study of Swildons Hole. Theoretical.

Pp 69-72. List of main effects and sites on Mendip.

### "Pioneer Under the Mendips". Herbert Ernest Balch of Wells

by W.I. Stanton. 123 pages.

He was born in 1869 and died in 1958. The book will tell you how he became leader of the group of people who pioneered caving under Mendip. If you want to know how Swildons and Eastwater were opened up and explored this book is a must. He led a very adventurous life and there are interesting tales about him in connection with just about every cave that was open before the 50s.

He was a self-taught man and could talk with confidence about the archaeology or geology of Mendip. He was the founder of Wells Museum -- and if you are interested in Wookey Hole Cave you should visit the Museum to examine the finds. The book is quarto size, contains many photos, is well indexed -- and above all its style makes it an easily read and valuable addition to anyone's library.

### "Mendip Karst Hydrology Project Phase 3"

by D.P. Drew, M.D. Newson and D.I. Smith. 28 quarto pages.

It is well known that the caves in the Burrington area drain their water to the risings at Rickford and Langford. This book describes what had to be done to make it "well-known". Very technical yet still readable it makes you realise that the study of caves is a very involved subject. When we say "it goes" the experts say "what goes", "to where does it go" and "what do you mean by goes".

"Reprint of Wessex Journal Volume 1".

About 70 quarto pages with Index.

Read how the Club was formed in 1934. What type of caving was done in those days. How the Club grew but was affected by the War. The people who revived it after the War and its progress up to the end of 1950. Amongst other things you can read about the discovery of Primrose Path in Eastwater and Dallimore's Cave.

"Supplement to Volume 8. The Hillgrove Log Books 1954 - 1963"

Edited by P.M. Giles. 97 quarto pages with Index.

Hillgrove became the Club headquarters in 1952, and this book is packed with records of trips and discoveries made during this period. It starts with accounts of dives in Swildons Sump 2. Cuckoo Cleeves addicts can read about earlier digging trip. Approx 60 different caves are mentioned in the text.

ACCOMMODATION IN THE LAKE DISTRICT

The Lancashire Caving and Climbing Club have invited Wessex members to use their hut at Tranearth, Coniston, in the southern Lake District. Anyone wishing to stay there should apply to the Hon. Hut Booking Secretary, 6 Honister Road, Burnley, Lancs.

ADDENDUM TO THE SURVEY LIST IN JOURNAL No. 151.

Sludge Pit & Nine Barrows Survey                      £0-30 Postage weight approx. 3oz.

This is the long awaited U.L.S.A. survey.

ACCESS TO SHATTER CAVE

W/L Cave was recently linked with Shatter Cave, and C.S.S. intend that all future trips to Shatter will be made via the W/L entrance. The original Shatter entrance will shortly be cemented over.

## OBITUARY

### Dr. Bertram Austin Crook

With the death on October 13th 1973 of Dr. B.A. Crook, Mendip has lost yet another of the ever reducing group of the "second generation" pioneer cavers of Mendip. The first era of exploration of its caves virtually came to an end with the outbreak of World War One, but when hostilities ceased a number of ex-service students attended a meeting at which it was decided to form the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society. Amongst those present was ex-prisoner-of-war B.A. Crook, and he soon became one of the most enthusiastic members of the Society. His interests included both caving and archaeology, and he assisted with the excavation of several sites in the Burrington area.

This close connection with the U.B.S.S. did not prevent Dr. Crook being keenly interested in the activities of the other Mendip clubs, and he became a member of the Wessex Cave Club and the M.N.R.C. - he was also a member of the South Wales Caving Club. As a founder member of the British Spelaeological Association, he was known and respected by cavers in all parts of the country. Dr. Crook was one of the first to realise that with the increasing popularity of caving it had become necessary to form a group to deal with accidents in caves, and so the Mendip Rescue Organization came into being. For many years Dr. Crook was the first choice medical warden, and the fact that he specialised in surgery at Paulton Hospital made him almost indispensable when an accident resulted in an injury to a caver. When his help was required he was always very quickly at the scene of the accident, and I well remember the occasion when he was in Goatchurch dealing with the broken leg of a caver before the warden who made the "call-out" reached the cave.

Dr. Crook was a very friendly and kindly man. He was always against any form of caving politics and often acted as a counsellor between groups of the caving fraternity. He had a great respect for the founder of Mendip caving, Mr. H.E. Balch, and "The Laurels", Timsbury, was an "open house" to many cavers. During the many years he was in practice at Timsbury he earned the respect and liking of his patients for his skill and integrity, and his interest in them was such that he remained in practice to within a year of his death.

A memorial service for him was held at Downside Abbey, and amongst the congregation were representatives of the Mendip societies. They included Dr. F.S. Wallis, Mr. & Mrs. J. Duck, T.H. Stanbury, and F.W. Frost.

F.W. Frost

## MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

### CAVE RESCUES AND INCIDENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDING 31 ST JANUARY 1974

There have been 15 rescues including alerts during the year. Four of the six major call-outs have resulted from bad falls, and 1973-74 might be dubbed the "Year of the Fracture". Two notable and ominous "firsts" have occurred; namely, the first abseiling accident in a Mendip cave and, recently, the first badly injured patient requiring rescue through a sump. These reflect the respective increases in abseiling and prussicking pitches and the trend for longer trips in Swildon's Hole by parties containing relatively inexperienced cavers. Whilst M.R.O. is strictly concerned with cave rescue matters, we feel obliged to urge more thought in using these new climbing aids and greater care regarding the composition of parties, especially on long trip.

The following log is based upon the full reports and field notes submitted by wardens following each rescue.

Sunday 15th April 1973.

Swildon's Hole

On returning from a trip beyond Sump 1 with two friends from Fifield, Oxford, David Dryden, aged 25, fell about 15ft on attempting a direct climb up the Well in the Upper Series. Suspecting a fractured ankle, one left the cave to call M.R.O. via Wells Police by 5.40pm.

Bob Mehew organized rescue teams on Priddy Green, the first party of three going into the cave at 6.10 p.m. A party of eight followed with basic equipment. A chance encounter with a R.A.F. medic with another party in the cave brought news that the injuries were more serious; in fact, a spiral fracture of the left tibia and a broken fibia. Dr. Don Thomson went down at 6.50 p.m. followed by six others carrying hauling gear and hot soups. The injured leg was plastered and the patient brought to the surface in a carrying sheet at 8.20 p.m. Brian Prewer and Alan Butcher organized the haul.

In a subsequent "thank you" letter David Dryden writes, "The accident was caused mainly through exhaustion...brought about by not eating a substantial meal beforehand. I had eaten something that didn't agree with me the day before and was feeling the after effects that day. Perhaps I'll know next time to abandon the trip if I'm not in A1 condition".

Tuesday 24th April 1973

Swildon's Hole

Keith Derrick, aged 23? his brother Stephen, 20 and Allan Sutton, 19, from Lawrence Weston, Bristol, were reported overdue from an early afternoon trip down the cave. They were not members of a club. The Police located their car on Priddy Green about 9.30pm. and informed M.R.O. via Howard Kenney. Brian Prewer and Dave Irwin were alerted to organise the search.

Ian Jepson, Doug Stuckey and Jim Durston, formed a party to search Swildon's 4 and the Trouble Series whilst a second party comprising Graham Wilton-Jones, Pete Littlewood and M. Rees went to Swildon's 2 and Vicarage Pot. Dave Irwin organized the surface arrangements and Brian Prewer's party took a telephone as far as Tratman's Temple.

The missing trio were found unharmed but shamed having abseiled down Vicarage Pot and pulling down the rope before realising their mistake. This was an exact repeat of the call-out on 2nd November 1969. We hope that the message has now been learnt.

Sunday 24th June 1973

Stoke Lane Slocker

A Wessex Cave Club party going down the cave was passed by a Cothan Caving Group party on its way out. The latter surfaced to be greeted by a heavy thunderstorm and the stream responded very rapidly.

Fearing for the safety of the Wessex party, G. Marshall went to the Belfry for support whilst P. Cronin and one other returned to the cave to warn those still underground. The Police were advised of the standby at 3.0pm.

The Wessex party were found making a rapid and safe exit before the stream rose to dangerous levels at the entrance. Stoke Lane Slocker is not a natural swallet, of course, and quickly floods following storms. There are plenty of places in Stoke 2 to sit out floods if the constricted entrance passages become impassable. Fortunately, water levels drop quickly after storms.

Saturday 30th June 1973

Goatchurch Cavern

Michael Yeadon, aged 22, was on his first caving trip with four others from the 8th Pinner Scout Group, Middlesex, when he fell and dislocated a shoulder in the Water Chamber. He became immobilised by the pain. The alarm was raised by M.R. Hickman who was leading the party. Wells Police contacted William Stanton at 12.25 p.m. and he requested Dave Irwin to organise those already in the cave to help. Dr. Stanley Cannicott was also alerted, and both were down the cave by 1.0 p.m.

The patient was injected with morphine, but attempts to return the shoulder failed. Thus, the arm was strapped and Yeadon encouraged to get out under his own steam by 2.0 p.m.

Saturday 30th June 1973

Longwood Swallet

Christopher Tress, aged 27, from Kingston-on-Thames, was on the way out following a visit to the August Hole Series with three others from the Mendip Caving Group when he fell off the 10ft climb into the entrance passages. He badly damaged his jaw and right cheek. Brian Prewer received the call from Wells Police at 3.10 p.m. A rescue party from the Belfry comprising of Bob Craig, Mike Palmer, I.R. Jones, Paul Radford and K.J. Malloy got to the cave with the necessary equipment at 4.30 p.m. They were met by Dave Irwin hotfoot from the earlier Goatchurch rescue.

The patient was given First Aid and persuaded to move out largely on his own. A sit harness was found to be very useful in helping him up the narrow entrance shaft. He was examined by Dr. Stanley Cannicott when he surfaced at 6.0 p.m. and then taken by ambulance to Weston-Super-Mare hospital for treatment.

Sunday 15th July 1973

St. Swithin's Day Alert!

The Meteorological Office issued a general warning that up to 2 inches of rain could fall in the Mendip area during the afternoon. Wells Police notified Dave Irwin of this at 12.30 p.m., requesting that steps be taken to deter people going down caves liable to flooding. After consultations with Howard Kenney, the information was posted in local caving club headquarters and parties intending to visit Swildon's Hole were warned.

In the event, the local falls were not as prolonged as first feared.

Sunday 22nd July 1973

Swildon's Hole

Howard Kenney received a telephone call direct from Mike Collins, Caving Secretary of the M.N.R.C., at 7.20 p.m. informing him that his friend Douglas Stephens was stuck on the far side of the Little Waterfall just inside the entrance at the beginning of the Dry Ways. In a subsequent letter, Mike Collins explains, "I was asked by a party coming from Swildon's Four to show them the short way out so they could get out before their lights faded. This I did, but Doug Stephens who is rather stocky got stuck, but adequately protected and would not suffer from exposure. I left the cave to summon assistance on Priddy Green. The chaps I helped went back down the cave to the rear of him via the Old Grotto, and one directly to him so he wouldn't be alone too long...".

To bring the saga to a happy conclusion, the three rescuers from the St. Alban's Caving Club quickly extricated Stephens.

Saturday 27th October 1973

Sidcot Swallet

Wells Police telephoned Howard Kenney at 4.30 p.m. requesting him to contact a Mr. Greenway at Burrington. It transpired that a party of five from Wolverhampton were in the cave when one of their carbide lamps came to pieces. Fearing that they might be gassed, three of them fled to raise the alarm supposing that their two companions might have been overcome. During the telephone conversation, the other two appeared.

The small quantities of acetylene gas from a carbide lamp are unlikely to be harmful in roomy caves, though quite low concentrations are combustible, of course. Do not attempt to seal the gas in since it detonates on compression to about two atmospheres.

Monday 12th November 1973

Swildon's Hole

A Cerberus Spelaeological Society party comprising Dave Townhill, his brother Robin and Graham Price went down the cave about 7.0 p.m. with the intention of abseiling down the old 40ft Pot on a double line. They looped their rope around two small stalagmites on the right side of the former landing. Both the Townhills made successful descents; however, when Graham Price began his abseil, the loop flicked off the belay and he fell about 30 feet with the loose rope. Fortunately, he did not crash on those below, but landed on his left hip sustaining a multiple fracture of the pelvis and a not too serious internal rupture.

Howard Kenney received the call from Wells Police at 8 p.m. and telephoned the Belfry requesting Bob Mehew to go underground to assess the situation. Wally Willcocks was contacted and took rescue gear to Priddy Green. Meanwhile, Jim Hanwell, Tim Reynolds and Dr. Stanley Cannicott were alerted; arriving on the Green at 9.10 p.m. and getting underground with the equipment at 9.30 p.m. Brian Prewer stood by with telephones and organised the surface parties. Both B.E.C. and Wessex C.C. teams were called out to make up hauling parties led by Fred Davies.

Dr. Stanley Cannicott administered two pain killing injections whilst Jim Hanwell, Tim Reynolds and Bob Mehew got the patient tied into the carrying sheet. This operation was complicated as the injuries prevented lacing in the conventional way; foot stirrups had to be devised to steady the free movement of the legs. A cummerbund of plaster was applied around the hips for support. The tedious long carry out started about 11.30 p.m. with successive teams taking over from each other. The patient did well throughout, subsequently recalling that the journey was comfortable and little pain was experienced. He surfaced at 1.30 p.m., was transferred to the new Land Rover Ambulance and taken to hospital in Bath. Cavers waiting at their homes were stood down by Howard Kenney by 2.0 a.m.

This potentially difficult rescue went well on the whole, although communications were delayed because the public call box on Priddy Green was inoperative. Sid Hobbs came to our aid as a runner. It is believed that the fall occurred because the rope was dry and stiff so "stood up" off the belay when the abseiler briefly supported his own weight on the ledge below the lip of the pitch.

Saturday 1st December 1973

Eastwater Cavern

Howard Kenney received a call from Wells Police at 7 p.m. to say that a Mr. Edwards from Byfleet, Surrey, was anxious about his friends overdue from a trip down the Twin Verticals route. They had gone down at about mid-day and had hoped to be out by 5.30 p.m. at the latest. They were adequately equipped. Edwards was advised to return to the entrance and await a rescue party. If the cavers surfaced in the meantime, he was to go to the Belfry and stand down any rescuers there. Alan Thomas was contacted at home but, by the time he arrived at the Belfry, Edwards had turned up with news that his party had got out having misjudged the time.

Thursday 10th January 1974.

Sludge Pit

Wells Police contacted Jim Hanwell at 2.40 a.m. reporting that a worried wife from Bristol had phoned in regarding an overdue party that had gone down the cave the previous evening. A patrol car was looking for the cars described by the informant. Whilst explaining that these would most likely be in Eastwater Lane if the party was still underground, a further message was received from Bristol reporting the safe return of the cavers. They had been delayed by a puncture. Surely, it would have been better had those involved troubled to contact their homes to announce the delay to avert needless worry and a rescue alert.

Saturday 19th January 1974

Swildon's Hole

Lindsay Smith, a 22-year old student with a Bath University C.C. party visiting Swildon's 2, fell at the 11ft drop in the Old Approach Passage. It was suspected that he had fractured an ankle, though he was found to have both tibia and fibia broken. Two of the university party coming out to raise the alarm were met by Nigel Taylor. Howard Kenney received the call-out via the Police at 8.40 p.m. and requested Nigel to form an advance party. He then proceeded to make a general stand-by of wardens and local rescue teams.

Dave Irwin organised the various teams on the surface and the residents of Fountain Cottage kindly allowed the use of their facilities as a base.

Oliver Lloyd brought out the Mark 2 Sump Rescue Apparatus and stood by on Priddy Green in case it was needed at Sump 1. Fred Davies took charge of the underground operations. After a rapid assessment of the situation, he resurfaced at 10 p.m. to report and collect hauling gear with additional ropes and sit harnesses to lower the patient down the 40 ft. drop out of the Old Approach. Meanwhile, Dr. Don Thomson and Chris Foster set out with medical kit. Brian Prewer and party laid a telephone line through the sump, it being agreed that sufficient fast-moving cavers were available to render a surface link-up unnecessary.

Whilst the leg was being plastered, Fred Davies' party arranged tackle for the lowering operation making two dummy runs. Using sit harnesses; Paul Hadfield "piggy-backed" the patient and both were played-out by Fred Davies through a belayed figure-of-eight descendeur. This proved very successful. Smith was in good spirits and able to help himself a lot. He had been given tablet pain-killers rather than injections because of the long journey ahead.

Sump 1 was the next obstacle overcome without difficulty. The telephone greatly enhanced the towing technique used. It was only his second time through a sump. Dry clothes and a goon suit were made available on the upstream side of the sump; but, the additional plaster supplied from Wells in case replastering was necessary following immersion was not required. Fresh teams took over the carrying at strategic points and useful progress was made upstream.

Another useful technique was pioneered at the 20 ft. drop to keep the patient clear of the waterfall. A line was threaded through the belay halfway up the climb out on the left, taken to the belay over the boss at the top and then stretched taut. Thus, after a short haul up the left side, the patient was then suspended by karabiners and cradled across the head of the pitch on the traversing line. A short knotted rope with karabiner was found very helpful when easing the weight from above in narrow passages.

Smith was out of the cave by 5 o'clock on the Sunday morning and taken to hospital in Bath in remarkably good spirits. Forty-nine rescuers had been underground, a further 30 were on local stand-by and another 19 awaited instructions at their homes. This was the longest distance haul yet made on Mendip and the first serious injury in Swildon's 2. It is probably not without significance that Lindsay Smith was the only member of the Bath party without a wet suit as well as being the least experienced caver. He had been caving five times previously, including one much shorter trip in Swildons.

Saturday 19th January 1974

Eastwater Cavern

Whilst engaged on the Swildon's rescue, it was reported that a party of three had not confirmed their return from a trip to the Primrose Pot. Details on the Shepton Mallet G.C. noticeboard indicated that they should have been out by 6.30 p.m. Dave Irwin requested Dave Turner and Jim Durston to reconnoitre the cave whilst the Police tried to locate those involved at their homes. The presence of a rope at the pot gave cause for alarm, but this was short-lived since one of the trio, J.Bunn, was found at home. Why make needless work by leaving ropes underground or failing to remove outdated information on noticeboards?

Sunday 20th January 1974

General Alert

The worried father of P. Sprules contacted Frome Police when his son failed to turn up after a day's caving at 2 a.m. A check of the list of those helping on the Swildons rescue showed that he was underground with the hauling parties. This incident underlines the need for accurate records during all rescue operations.

Sunday 27th January 1974

Eastwater Cavern

A party from the Harrow Moles club were reported about 2½ hours overdue during the evening. No official call-out was received and so it appears that they under-estimated the duration of their trip. This is proving to be a common occurrence with parties unfamiliar with the cave.

J.D. Hanwell,  
Hon. Secretary and Treasurer,  
Mendip Rescue Organisation  
"Chaumbey",  
50 Wells Road,  
Wookey Hole,  
Wells, BA5 1DN,  
Somerset.

## MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

### CALL-OUT ARRANGEMENTS STARTING ON SUNDAY 3rd MARCH 1974 FOR MENDIP

The Police in the Mendip area have announced that all calls of an emergency nature must be routed through their regional control centre at Frome as from Sunday 3rd March 1974. To comply with this new system, all calls for Cave Rescue must be:-

DIAL 999 Ask for POLICE  
Then request Police for CAVE RESCUE

A facsimile of the basic M.R.O. notices displayed at the entrance to major caves is illustrated below. The names of caves will be added to these notices and the locations of the nearest telephone appended. Please follow the instructions.

1. The Police will require the following information  
NAME AND ADDRESS OF CALLER  
NUMBER AND SITUATION OF PHONE  
NATURE OF ACCIDENT  
NAME OF CAVE  
POSITION IN CAVE (IF KNOWN)  
NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN PARTY  
EXPERIENCE AND CONDITION OF PARTY
2. The informant must remain at the phone until contacted by an M.R.O. Warden who will give instructions
3. The Police have been requested to ring Wardens in list order until one is located.
4. The Police and Warden will jointly decide what action is necessary.
5. Any further action will be at the discretion of Wardens and Police.

J.D. Hanwell  
Hon. Secretary & Treasurer  
Mendip Rescue Organization.

**M.R.O.**  
IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT  
**DIAL 999 ASK FOR POLICE**  
THEN REQUEST **POLICE** FOR  
**CAVE RESCUE**  
GIVE DETAILS AND STAY AT PHONE UNTIL  
CONTACTED BY MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION  
THE NEAREST TELEPHONE IS AT:-

## NOT NOW AND AGAIN, BUT AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN

### PART I

by Fred Davies

'Twas 27th June 1970 when I first wrapped my rope around a convenient chockstone at the head of Maine's Aven and slithered down the 40' or so to the bottom. It was not until I referred to notes for this tale that I realised that it was on 10th June 1962 that Mike Boon and I had been the first men to stand and look up that impressive aven which we had named in honour of Mr. A. Maine. Eight years between my two visits to that spot and now I approached it from above. But not yet, as had been many men's dream, by a direct route from Priddy Green.

My earlier adventures in this far part of Swildon's Hole, the Cowsh Aven Series, have been previously related in S.M.C.C. Journal Series Three, No. 5, May 1963. (Might I digress to emphasise that the name is COWSH after the material that flows down through the series, and not COWISH to describe its nature - the latter is a perversion of nomenclature that appears to have crept into some usage lately). In 1963 a great deal of work was done in these regions by members of the Severn Valley C.C. giving rise to considerable extensions. I had never, however, thought to see these, for other interests kept me out of active cave exploration for several years, but then in 1970 Ray Mansfield and I made several trips into Swildon's IV, looking at many side passages. At last, of course, the only side passage left was Cowsh Aven. "How do we get up?" said Ray. "Climb", said I. "If Severn Valley can do it surely we can".

Thus on 20th June, Ray, Martin Mills, Brian Woodward and I, armed with slings, pegs, and hammers, went to IV. Taking it in turn, we made a few feet of progress, got a peg in a bit higher, then retired to stream level for a rest. Finally with a violent scrabble Ray disappeared over the top; we were up. Through to Great Aven, it was "just as I remembered it", and the climb up to the ledge went very easily. Now, as we made several tries at climbing it, I learnt the value of a chinstrap. It is, to put it mildly, embarrassing when 15' up a climb, with no runners or belays close, you look up and your helmet falls to the full extremity of the accumulator cable. At least it illuminates the holds below that you are going to need for the descent.

The ledge is a wet and windy place, we were soon a cold party and retired to the Hunter's bar. Ray, that literature expert, now decided that it was time to learn just what S.V.C.C. had done. None of their party was around to be consulted but S.V.C.C. Journal No. 1 1964 contains a fine article by Mike Wooding. Surprise - they had used maypole on Cowsh Aven and on Great Aven above the ledge., We decided on a future trip to investigate the traverse above Cowsh Aven and ascend the Boss Pot - Bladder Pot route discovered by them.

We were back at that scented scene on 27th June. The traverse back over the top of Cowsh Aven is not difficult, but it does involve one long stride on very muddy holds, and is exposed - about 40' back into the IV streamway if you lose your grip. We got a peg into the roof and stretched a fixed rope across. It is probably mainly psychological but does help. On the far side we found a steeply ascending passage with the sides sharp ledges of thinly bedded rock, a struggle to ascend. After an 8' vertical, the passage bore right (our right not true right), became less steep, but narrower till we reached a circular chamber, 10' in diameter and at least 25' in height. A couple of shoulders soon had Ray Mansfield up into the obvious passage 12' up the right wall. This is the Little Pot of S.V.C.C. exploration.

The passage entered proved to be the base of another aven, 15' by 6'. We found it fairly easy to straddle up the nearer end, traverse on good ledges at a height of 20', and so wriggle up over boulders, past a huge stal. boss on our left, to the base of yet another aven. We had now climbed Boss Pot. The aven entered, obviously the Bladder Pot explored from above by the Severn Valley lads, is big - it is on the same scale as Great Aven, but rarely has a similar quantity of water falling down it. Also, having stal. covered walls it is considerably lighter in atmosphere. The far end of the aven proved to be an easy climb, straddling on

big ledges with thread belays for runners, to a height of about 45' when a muddy slope on the south side leads into Ken's Crawl. Belays are not numerous at the top. I found a small stal. pillar on the north side and used a thread behind that whilst bringing up the rest of the party.

Ken's crawl is just roomy enough for fairly easy progress and it then opens out at the black slimy ledges above Maine's Aven. We had a good look around and saw that the water came from a small crack in the roof at the north end of Maine's Aven. The roof at the south end seemed more open, allowing one to peer up a narrow stal. lined rift. Traversing over the top of Maine's, where I was glad to be held on a rope, I entered a continuation of Ken's Crawl which seemed choked with silt after 15'. At the point where Ken's Crawl meets Maine's Aven, a subsidiary system of rifts, up and down, exists on the west side. This was clearly the route by which Ken Higgs had first reached the top of Maine's.

So here I am back at the point first mentioned in this account, my rope wrapped around a chockstone at the north end of Maine's, abseiling down to ground I had previously seen eight years earlier. Grotty slings were still attached to a chockstone in the roof of the crawl out to Great Aven. We carefully arranged a krab as belay at the very end of the tube - abseil ropes will not pull off from a belay several feet around a corner - and down we went to the ledge. This is not an easy abseil to start as it entails wriggling through a tube tighter than the Goatchurch drainpipe and debouching over a 35' drop to the ledge. The simplest of techniques, a willingness to be without complicated aids, is probably the safest here. A quick drop to the floor of Great Aven, down Cowsh, pulling our rope off from a belay hanging well over the edge, and, landing in IV, we had the illogical feeling of being "nearly out". Then, far points in caves, I have found, often lead to that feeling.

Talking about things over some beer we reckoned that the series needed pushing again and that it would provide a worthwhile project to give us some interesting caving for a few months. At that time we did not really know what a "few months" meant.

On the basis of our two visits to the Cowsh Series, we chose four projects.

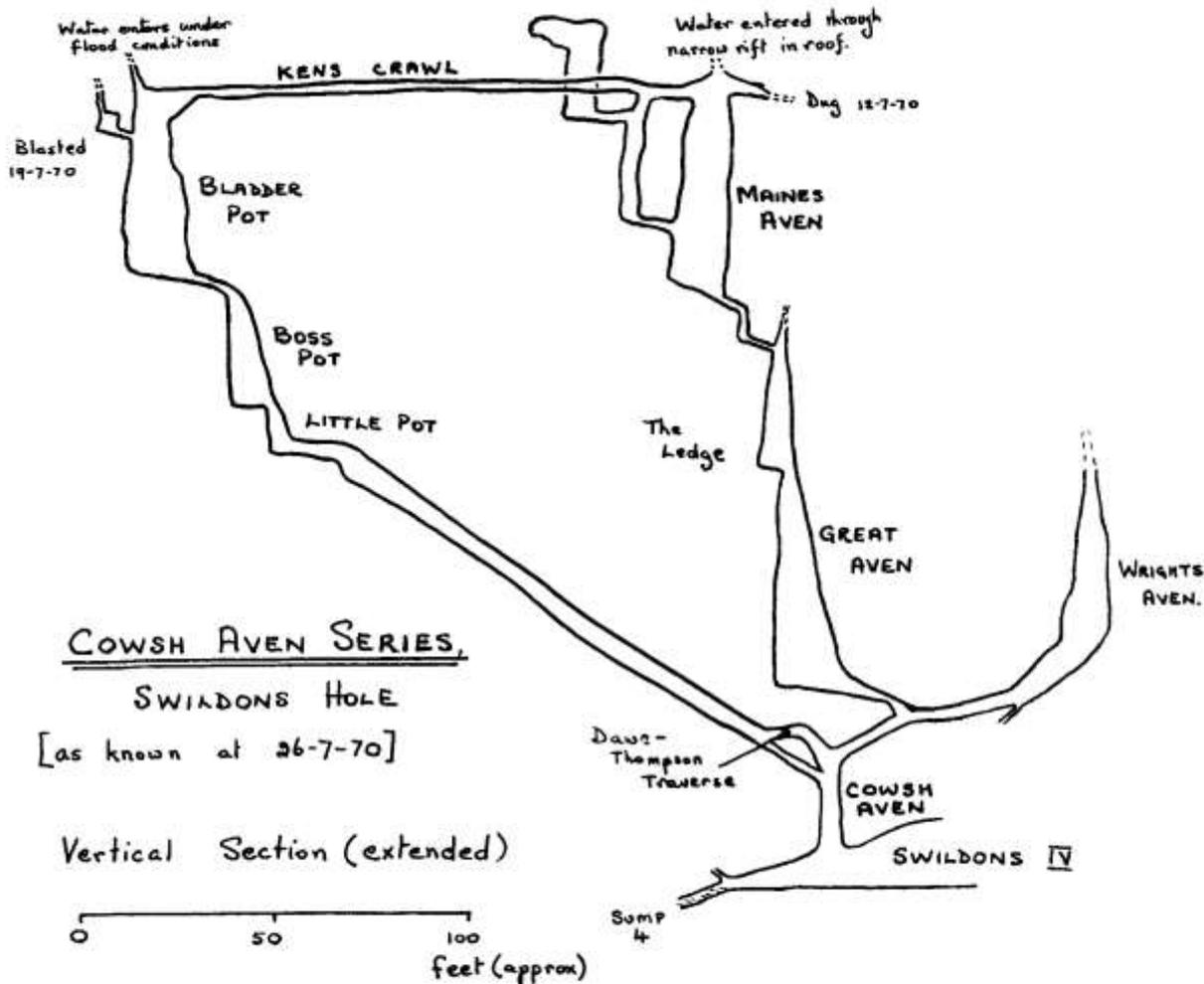
- 1) Wright's Aven, which is to the side of Great Aven, had never been surveyed and should be looked at very closely.
- 2) The crawl continuation of Ken's Crawl should be dug.
- 3) A hole in the crack at the north end of Bladder Pot and about 10' from the top could be banged.
- 4) The point where the water emerged above Maine's Aven should be pushed hard. Willie Stanton was invited to assist in Project 1.

Ray Mansfield, Bob Mehew and I set out to look more closely at Wright's Aven and sort out some better belays on the drops on 5th July. Unfortunately we did not even reach IV, for we found some poor lost creatures in Breakfast Chamber and had the task of escorting them out. That's the drawback to being underground by 9.00 a.m. - you pick up all the previous day's debris!

Still, we had no trouble on Sunday, 12th July, and half an hour's work with an entrenching tool on the far side of Maine's Aven gained some 6' of passage and showed it to continue as an 8" diameter rock tube - we thought there must be better places to work. Again we had a straightforward trip up to the Series on 19th July. A small charge was placed on the side of the hole in Bladder Pot; we fired it from the top of Maine's Aven, and descended by that route.

On the 26th we were back as a much larger team, including Tim Reynolds and WIS to survey. We entered the hole off Bladder Pot with no difficulty and beyond was a 6' x 6' chamber with the possibility of a way on up in the roof over steep stal. slopes. We could not make it go more than 8' and I found myself with Tim sitting in my lap when he made a rather uncontrolled descent back into the chamber. Well, we thought, that means pushing the crack above Maine's Aven and trying to find the water.

The accompanying section is not intended to be accurate but will I hope make quite clear the points which we had so far examined. One thing I have omitted is the chamber, with a way on through boulders, entered by Mike Wooding in Great Aven above the Ledge. From reading his article in the S.V.C.C. Newsletter I assume it to be in the wall opposite the tube leading to Maine's Aven There is one name on the section that perhaps requires justification - Dawe - Thompson Traverse. I have used the name, not because they were first to cross, but because they were the first to climb up and attempt to cross (see S.M.C.C. Jnl. Series 3 No. 5 May 1963). Severn Valley cavers do not appear to have given any name to this feature and I feel that one is needed at this point.



## **DRY IN WOOKEY NINE**

W.I. Stanton

When Madam Tussaud's bought Wookey Hole Caves from Mrs. Olive Hodgkinson early in 1973, the company had already noted that the show cave became extremely crowded at peak holiday times. In particular, the movement and chatter of visitors on the way out of the cave interfered with the enjoyment of parties on the way in. Things were becoming critical because the number of visitors to the Caves was increasing at about ten per cent annually. The new owners, represented at the Caves by Mr. Graham Jackson, were therefore anxious to investigate the possibility of opening a second entrance to convert the classic in-out visit into a round trip.

Several schemes were considered, but only one appeared to offer a real solution. This took advantage of the cave's blunt hairpin shape, (The end of the show cave, Chamber Three, is at the bend of the hairpin, and Chamber Nine is in fact closer to the cave entrance than Three). By driving a tunnel linking Three and Nine to the valley near the resurgence, the round trip would be achieved, more of the cave would become accessible, and an approach to the cave through the Paper Mill and the valley would be natural. The total length of tunnel would be about 500 feet.

Although Cave Diving Group surveys of the cave beyond Chamber Five exist, they were considered insufficiently accurate by Ken White, the engineer in charge of the feasibility study. He instructed me, as his geological and caving consultant, to obtain a precise survey of Nine.

This posed a bit of a problem. I had neither time nor inclination to take up cave diving. Geophysical approaches were considered, and rejected on the grounds of expense, inaccuracy and unreliability. An underwater survey by a group of divers, checked and rechecked by independent groups, was felt to be practicable, but difficult to arrange and to assess for accuracy. As the possibility of a conventional dry survey existed, I examined that first.

John Parker, that remarkable Welshman, had been following up his diving successes in the remoter parts of Wookey by rock-climbing extravagances in the roof of Nine. Wearing, I understand, his usual Wellington boots, he had reached a roof passage that led all the way to Five, via swims across the lakes in Eight and Seven. This exploit had been briefly described in the C.D.G. Newsletters for January and July 1973. Now, if the sluices were opened to lower the water level in Four and Five, a non-diver should be able to reach Nine.

At this stage the effects of completely opening the main sluice at the resurgence were not known. While the Paper Mill was working, experimentation had been frowned on. Now Graham Jackson found that the water level in Three dropped 4.5 feet in 4 hours. In One, Three and Four the river flowed shallow and noisy over stones, eroding vast quantities of mud and silt from its banks. A big stalagmite was uncovered in One growing on rocks in the river bed. At the resurgence I observed three bullheads (big-headed fish two inches long) stranded on the weed. Two were still alive and were saved, but one had expired. Their colouring was normal, and presumably they live in the resurgence archway and the canal.

One evening the official surveyors Ray, Peter and Bob (tacheometer men) and I waded into Four, a small low chamber with the famous sandbank on the left as you enter. Above the sandbank phreatic recesses and impassable tubes perforate the roof, and their smoke-blackened walls are inscribed with deeply-cut initials presumably dating from before about 1850 when the resurgence weir was built. We then embarked in a rubber dinghy and splashed around the deep water in Five. Although one man climbed about 25 feet up the main aven, we failed to locate John Parker's roof passage.

The passage known as Charon's Chamber leads back from One towards the line of the proposed tunnel, and Tom Davies, Bob Elliot and I (Reservoir Hole diggers) surveyed it one Saturday afternoon in July. It extends about 120 feet, rising and splitting into several parallel rifts ending in chokes close to the little cave, Troup's Rift, a few feet above and east of the resurgence. It will slightly affect the alignment of the tunnel.

In July I wrote to John Parker asking if he could lead a surveying party through his upper route to Nine. A reconnaissance trip was arranged, but unfortunately a planning error caused surveyors and divers to assemble at the cave on different days! After his visit, during which he tackled and detackled the upper route, John opined to Graham that it was very severe and hardly a practical route to Nine, but he would be willing to have a go at surveying through it later in the year.

We had to accept John's opinion on the upper route's severity, and we inferred that to survey it accurately would be extremely difficult. Therefore, as the whole project would be held up until the position and shape of Nine were established, we examined a different line of attack. This had previously been shelved because it involved digging.

Another of John's discoveries in Wookey had been a passage leading from high in the roof of Nine to a point near the ground surface, as evidenced by tree roots. The climb into it was fairly difficult, but was regularly undertaken by divers. If we knew the exact position of the choke terminating this passage, a new entrance could probably be dug. So I contacted Brian Prewer and Oliver Lloyd.

Prew was going on holiday, but he very kindly instructed me in the use of his radiolocation equipment and did what he could to waterproof it in the short time available. Meanwhile Oliver organised a party of divers, Martin Waller, Adrian Cooper and Sandy Navrady, to take the transmitter in to the choke.

Location day was August 5th. The divers went in after lunch, and the receiving party: Graham, Tom and Phil Davies, Luke Devenish and poodle, and I, trudged up the hill above the cave in the rain. The woods proved to be over-populated by frisky bullocks that found the poodle highly attractive, so that Luke had to go and stand far away until the novelty wore off.

Transmission time came and went, but all we received was mains hum and BBC music. We grew more and more wet and despondent, until suddenly, half an hour late, there came a loud double "ping" repeated every 5 seconds: the signal! Hastily we began Prew's homing-in procedure and soon had a rough centre, quickly refined to exact position using his metacentre procedure. Then, turning to his depth formula, we were astonished to find that the transmitter was apparently only ten feet below our boots'. We stamped on the ground, but heard no answering thumps.

I had earlier searched this part of the slopes very carefully, but had found absolutely no trace of subsidence, vegetation change, etc., to indicate a cave close beneath.

The divers subsequently told us that they had placed the transmitter loop in the highest accessible cavity in the terminal boulder choke. A conventional cave dig was clearly possible, but as time was of the essence I heeded Luke's advice and hired a mechanical device, to wit, a Hy-Mac tracked digger. Two mornings later I led this clanking monstrosity up to the radiolocation site. It cleared itself a stance, and then began to gulp. Five bites, and solid rock was exposed 2 feet down. I directed it to widen the pit downhill, and this time a 4-inch rift leading down into open cave was exposed. More scraping, and the solid rock by the rift began to quiver and suddenly dropped a foot. The way into Nine was open after only ten minutes work. Surely the quickest dig in Mendip history! Such is "progress".

I slipped quickly down to make sure it was the right cave, and soon found muddy footprints. Then Prew arrived and we walled up an entrance shaft to allow the Hy-Mac to backfill the excavation. The roof of the rift had been only 3 feet under the topsoil. The sun came out and shone hotly on cream-coloured stalagmites 6 feet below ground level.

The "exploration" was held the same evening, attended by Prew, Tom, Bob and me. Graham, to his surprise and indignation, found that the narrowish entrance shaft gave him claustrophobia, and withdrew. We found the passage roomier than expected, and were impressed by its abrupt termination 90 feet up in the roof of a large reverberating chamber, Wookey Nine itself. We knew there was a climbable bypass to this sheer pitch, but try as we would, double and triple-checking the side passages, we could not find it. Somewhat shamed, we emerged nonetheless delighted with the day's work.

Next evening the brutal and licentious Reservoir Hole soldiery turned out in force to begin the survey, i.e. Will Edwards, Terry Tooth, Brian Mulloy and me, with Prew and a mysterious stranger thought to be the wicked Barabobath. For reasons of haste a Grade 5 survey was chosen, and was taken to the head of the big pitch. The bypass was discovered starting as a squeeze through the middle of a grotto, and the floor of Nine was reached. It is a fine chamber with its clean conglomerate walls, deep green pools, drip-pocketed and castellated mud bank, and historic divers' castoffs. Three days later Tom, Bob, Terry and I took the survey to the floor of Nine and out again. It closed to 0.8 metres horizontally and 4 millimetres vertically, according to Sir Algol's magic engine, and this was considered to be on the lucky side of satisfactory.

Wookey Nine had been located, dug into, and surveyed, in less than one week. Moreover, we had almost started a new legend when a cave guide with a tourist party in Three had observed the divers line jerking strongly, though he knew there were no divers for miles around!

A few days later I escorted a party of non-cavers, Ken White and his surveyors, into the mighty system. Ray and Peter halted at the head of the big drop, being convinced of the impracticality of a tacheometric survey, but Ken made it to the bottom and tramped about trying to decide on the best point of entry for the tunnel. John Parker and two other divers were also present, surveying the upper route from Nine to Five.

When Ken, Ray and Peter were out again we had a quick cuppa and then I changed into wet suit and hastened back to Nine, hoping for a chance to view the upper way to Five. John was on his way out with a failing lamp, but he borrowed another and turned about to act as guide.

We climbed the 25 foot ladder over the pool, slid over the huge jammed rock and entered an arched passage 10 feet wide and 4 feet high, which after only 15 feet broke into the side of Eight. John had fixed a rope to bridge this 10 feet wide chasm, and was inclined to krab on and slide across to a T-shaped rent in the far wall, but today out of deference to the aged he descended a 25 foot ladder to the lake, swam across, and climbed another 25 foot ladder to the rent. I followed, much enjoying the swim in the green water 20 feet deep. Eight is a nice rift chamber about 50 feet long, 10 feet wide and at least 50 feet high, with no dry land.

The rent is a hole in the remarkably thin (only 2 feet) rock partition separating the parallel chambers Eight and Seven. We climbed through it and straight down a 25 foot ladder into the lake in Seven, which is a larger version of Eight. We swam the length of this lake, then scaled the narrow north end of the chamber on a 50 foot ladder to a low passage. Twenty-five feet along it, past a thin rift with a view down to water 50 feet below, was a chasm 4 feet wide and 50 feet deep to water. This was Six. John took a bold step across it to a passage on the far side, but, my affection for such acrobatics having died decades ago, I stayed put and accepted his assurance that Five was only 15 feet beyond.

On the return I circumnavigated all the lakes, paying special attention to those in Seven and Eight in case it was possible to plan the tunnel so as to obtain a view of them.

When in Seven I could see nothing to justify John's admirable climb up the north end of the chamber. From lake level there was no sign of the high-level passage. Questioned, he indicated that his natural stubbornness was responsible. Once again, unreasonable persistence proved the key to cave discovery! Whatever the reason, it gave me one of the pleasantest swims of my caving career.

I made two more visits, to examine side passages and generally poke about, before the upper entrance was filled in. The high-level ways from Nine to the surface provide evidence of previously unknown stages in the evolution of Wookey Hole. The route from Nine direct to the upper entrance is the highest, and is heavily scalloped for outward flow. This large phreatic passage is to the Wookey Hole system as Great Oones Hole is to the Cheddar Caves, and in fact the similarity between Mendip's two greatest resurgence systems is now seen to be extraordinarily close. The top Wookey outlet is slightly higher (360 feet A.O.D. as against 320 feet A.O.D.). Both systems have intermediate outlet passages between the top one and the major one represented by the show cave: at Cheddar these make up the Long Hole and at Wookey they consist of distributaries at about 300 feet and 270 feet A.O.D.

In each system all the dry upper levels distribute from a single low-level source: the Ninth Chamber at Wookey and the Boulder Chamber at Cheddar. The fact that at Wookey this source is shared by the active river has enabled the divers to explore it and find the upstream continuation of the dry levels, Wookey Twenty. I hope to elaborate on all this elsewhere.

During our perambulation of the upper route from Nine to Five, John Parker had pointed out to me blackish deposits on ledges and floor, especially between Six and Seven. Some of them appeared to be lightly stalagmited over. He suggested they were smoke deposits dating from the Roman and pre-Roman occupation of the cave. Certainly, before the dam was built at the resurgence (about 1850), resulting in the sumping of the passage between Three and Four, there can have been no obstacle to air circulating as far as Nine. In fact the smoke (if such it is, and an analysis would tell) could also have passed that way from the "shevys of reed sedge" used for lighting by mediaeval visitors to the cave, and from later methods used to illuminate the great chambers involving combustible oil, fat, wax, etc.

Until 1926, when electric lighting was installed, it was customary "for the guide to throw on the river a flare of benzoline or petrol" (H.E. Balch in 'Mendip, the Great Cave of Wookey Hole' page 3). This has resulted in the hundreds of straw stalactites in One, Two and Three being black with short white tips.

If at any time before 1850 the upper entrance was even slightly open, the cave would "draw" like a chimney in cold weather, and smoke in the show cave would pass through the upper way from Five to Nine. Maybe it's just coincidence, but the oldest known possible reference to Wookey Hole, dating from about 200 A.D. when the cave was inhabited, refers to just such a draught: "when, then, the wind blows into the cave and is drawn on into the bosom of the interior, a sound is heard as of the clashing of numerous cymbals" (H.E. Balch, *op.cit.* page 35). Of course, the middle entrances just above the show cave door could produce a similar effect, but on a minor scale, with the air circulation limited to the passages between One and the cliff.

Finally, the "clashing of cymbals". Balch, who heard a variety of strange noises during his period of intensive work in the cave, 1904-1914 (and was the first since Clement of Alexandria, whose reference is given above, to record them), they found that sounds meeting this description were produced by the bursting of large bubbles as they passed under the submerged arch between Three and Four. He observed that the river level was such that the archway was only sealed by the tiniest depth of water. Then, if there was an air pressure difference between the two sides, the slightest ripple would break the seal and allow a string of bubbles to pass through.

The difficulty is that this particular archway can seldom if ever have sumped before the resurgence dam was built in 1850. Perhaps, then, there is another arch in the Six to Nine region that functions in the same way when the river is five feet or so lower. But, it will be objected, the existence of the high-level bypass to all these sumps means there will be no air pressure difference between the chambers. Well, maybe so, but if at some time the upper entrance was open enough to let a good draught through, in a cold winter the wind would simply belt into the bosom of the interior, and in view of the mainly small size of the high-level passage between Six, Seven and Eight a significant pressure difference could result.

To the ancient cave-dwellers, a clashing of distant cymbals coming from the roof of Five, where their smoke vanished, would be more mysterious than a noisy bursting of visible bubbles. It's a nice hypothesis, which may yet be tested.

### Acknowledgement

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## **THE USE OF ORDNANCE SURVEY MATERIAL BY THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB**

by Richard Kenney

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## FROM THE LOG

### 29th December 1973 SWILDONS HOLE

A. Newport, I. Jepson, Pete Moody to Swyne-Puke dig. With me on the far side of the U tube and Ian and Aubrey the Terminus Choke side digging was fairly successful moving spoil from the digging area to be dumped down the rift. Unfortunately the top of the hauling bag broke and the digging had to be abandoned. Ian and Aubrey then expressed a desire to see the dig itself, although warned that it was full of water they were aghast at having wasted so much (drinking) time and energy on the prospect. PM. True Version by rest of party. 1 hr was spent in removing 4 bags ½ full of spoil. Two of Pete's comments were:- "It's a promising site but its impossible to dig"! and "I think this trip is harder than going to 12".

### 31st December 1973 SWILDONS HOLE

Bob Ellinor and Pete Moody to XII. After blowing up the Flood Bypass once again we climbed Victoria Aven (not without difficulty) and proceeded to the terminal choke of the Desperation Extension. Having blown that up we made our weary way back to the surface. 9 hrs.

P.M.

### 3th January 1974 SWILDONS HOLE

Paul Hadfield, I. Jepson, R. Bainbridge and R. Barnacott to Vicarage Pot to replace the tatty rope on the far side with a rather better piece. IJ and RB to Abandon Hope to fit a handline on the climb at the top of the 40ft chimney, and also on the "up-in slope" of the muddy U tube. Also to deliver two large, good quality buckets to Good Stuff Dig. The passage, it might be added, of these large buckets through the crawls, was something of an epic! The aforementioned handlines, it should be noted, are intended purely to assist digging parties en route to and from G.S.D.. They will be removed as soon as the dig goes -- if not sooner ? The dig appears rather better now, as the bank on one side has slumped, and revealed a solid mud slope, which should provide a much more stable wall. Surprisingly little water in the dig, especially considering the amount of rain which has fallen lately. The trip was marred only by the loss of various pieces of equipment by the two Richards. 4 hrs. IJ. Vicarage Pot. The bolt appears to be working loose but should be OK for downwards pull -- passage to end of Vicarage still sumped.

P.H.

### 5th January 1974 PINETREE POT

Barry Wilkinson, Alison Hooper, Pete Moody. Very pleasant tourist trip down 'Easy Street' and we recommend it to double-jointed people and masochists. After Barry thought better of an S bend Pete and I continued to the bottom, which is well worth digging if you like that sort of thing. Visitors will be pleased to know that it is possible to sit up with a great deal of imagination in the 'large' chamber at the end. Had a slight bit of difficulty getting back onto the ladder which was 3ft short but recommend Barry's head for this purpose. Barry discovered that the 10ft entrance pipe is unclimbable in a wet suit but we eventually let him out because he had the car keys:- Good trip to lose friends on and definitely interesting for long legged people.

(Never Again!) Alison.

RRK. In compiling these notes for the Journal there are several articles that I have to pass over. Some I just cannot read (do your writing before your drinking please) and others, of which the Pinetree Pot entry is a good example, do not record new discoveries, digging or attempts at the same, but are worth reading. Why not visit Upper Pitts and read the whole Log?

### 12th January 1974 CUCKOO CLEEVES

A. Hooper, P. Moody, D. Stead, P. Hadfield to Mk 2 Dig. Alison managed to pass the initial very tight rift. She continued, after knocking a large boulder out of the roof, still in narrow low rift passage for about 30ft to yet another constriction, where wider passage with stal. flow on the walls was visible beyond. The initial squeeze in the rift will need more bang if more normal sized persons are to pass it. There is a strong persistent draught at the site.

P.H.

### 13th January 1974 AUGUST HOLE

Fred Davies, Paul Hadfield. Blew 24ozs about halfway down Reynolds Passage. Fred's idea is to ease access to the far end of the passage in order to aid work in the new extension. N.B. The red/green/white wire currently laid in the passage is NOT suitable for electrical detonation because of its high resistivity.

P.H.

### 13th January 1974 GB

Alison Hooper, Pete Moody, Paul Hadfield. Tourist trip to Bat Passage, Great Chamber and White Passage. Great Chamber does NOT conform to the description given in "Caves of Mendip" and is well worth a visit with a camera and bags of lighting kit. On leaving Ladder Dig extensions we found the terminal choke of Main Chamber sumped and water backing up about 150ft into the chamber.

P.H.

### 19th January 1974 SWILDONS HOLE

Swildons XII. Pete Moody. Found the Flood-Bypass had finally gone -- to Sump 12B. The sump looks desirable but tight.

Martin Bishop, Paul Hadfield. Swildons IX. Collected climbing gear from IX and had two abortive attempts to climb into avens in the lower part of VII. Moved back to the handline going down to Sump 6 and traversed across to the left over sand to an aven covered in creamy flowstone. Climbed a considerable distance up this (conservative estimate 100ft) and could still see a way on although it got a little tighter. On returning through the 6 bypass Mr. Bishop, while playing with his lump hammer, was heard to call quietly for some assistance. Upon investigating I discovered that he had removed a large slab of rock about 4' x 2' x 4' from the roof of the duck. This had fallen in front of him and was effectively stopping his exit. Thoughts of "ale" bought in gratitude overcame my baser instincts and I removed the obstruction from the upstream side.

P.H.

### 27th January 1974 CUCKOO CLEEVES

Alison Hooper, A1 Mills, Barry Wilkinson, Pete Moody, John ?. Following Alison's success at MK2 it was decided to recommence banging operations. The passage immediately beyond Slurp Squeeze (banged out of existence in 72) is tear shaped and about 4ft high. The largest section, at floor level, is between 6 and 7" wide. The rift opens out after 5ft and turns sharp right. We found in 1972 that it was easiest to bang the passage in the roof where it is much narrower and just let the spoil accumulate at the bottom. As there is a most excellent draught at MK2 it's possible to bang several times in one trip. We set off laden down with a stove, water, soup, tea, etc, determined to keep blasting away until we were through. The first charge was fired without problem and everything looked rosy. On the second charge there was a misfire but after changing the detonator it fired successfully. But on the third charge two misfires occurred before we traced the fault to a partial break in the new bang wire. After reconnecting the charge with some of the original 72 wire everything went smoothly. By now we were all feeling the cold and

suffering badly from nerves so a retreat was called. However, it's almost certain that the way on to the corner is now open to all instead of only ghosts, wraiths and Alison Hooper.

P.M.

### 2nd February 1974 CUCKOO CLEEVES

Barry Wilkinson, Rich Gordon, Al Mills, Pete Moody, Phil Hendy and the Alison to our 5000ft extension to Cuckoo Cleeves which we can't quite get into. Four charges, ¼lb – 2lbs laid in the crawl (Boots and Buttocks Squeeze) beyond Slurp Squeeze and detonated with spectacular noise -- but no effect. It gets very cold sitting and waiting, waiting and sitting. We can now nearly get round the corner. There is an audible connection with Mk1 or the passage near it. 5 hrs. This dig continues to look promising, but no marble staircases and un-lightable halls yet.

### 16th February 1974 CUCKOO CLEEVES

Al Mills, Rich Gordon, Alison Hooper, Pete Moody, Keith?. More blasting. Boots and Buttocks Squeeze is now no more. However, all the bang debris which has accumulated now makes it impossible to get around the corner into the rest of the passage discovered by Alison. Digging is required before the next banging trip.

### 23rd February 1974 CUCKOO CLEEVES

Alison Hooper, Pete Moody. To Mk 2 and cleared debris from the bend blasted the previous week. After a bit of work Alison was able to get around it and along to the constriction which stopped her progress on 12th Jan. By digging away the floor she was able to pass it and proceeded along a very constricted passage. Realising that the dig had at last gone I made a supreme effort and passed the bend and was able to follow Alison into the extension. Some 40ft from the bend Alison was stopped by what she thought was a pitch. However, she soon found it was a lake which was deeper than her when she fell in. The new extension consists of 40ft of really thrutchy passage, a lake 20ft long, 4ft wide and of undetermined depth. A choked inlet comes in at the far end and the draught goes up a very unstable aven choked with loose boulders. After making an initial exploration we returned to Slurp Squeeze where we met Phil Hendy. Back at Upper Pitts we persuaded Rich Gordon, Aubrey Newport and Al Mills to have a look at the extension. Rich managed to pass the squeeze and continued to the lake and climbed the aven for 30ft. Aubrey couldn't manage the bend while Al passed the bend but was stopped by a large boulder which one has to squeeze over -- so much for 6mm wetsuits Al!